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September 22, 2005

RECEIVED
SEP 23 2005
DIV. OF HOUSING
POLICY DEVELOPMENT HCD

Sean Walsh
Director
Governor's Office of Planning and Research
P.O. Box 3044
Sacramento, CA 95812-3044

Re: City of Larkspur's Annual Status Report on the General Plan

Dear Mr. Walsh:

The City of Larkspur is pleased to submit its Annual Status Report on the City's General Plan. The Report was reviewed by the Larkspur City Council at their September 21st meeting. The City completed its General Plan Housing Element update in November of last year. This is the first annual status report on the newly adopted Element.

Please contact me at (415) 927-5025 if you have any questions regarding the report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Kaufman".

Nancy Kaufman
Planning Director

Enclosure

cc: State Housing & Community Development Department
City Manager

CITY OF LARKSPUR
Staff Report

DATE: September 21, 2005

TO: LARKSPUR CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Nancy Kaufman, Planning Director

SUBJECT: **2005 Annual Report on the Larkspur General Plan**

ACTION REQUESTED

- Accept 2005 Annual Report on the Larkspur General Plan.
- Direct staff to send Annual Report to the State Office of Planning and Research and the State Department of Housing and Community Development.

REFERENCE

Government Code Section 65400(b)(1)

FISCAL IMPACT

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW STATUS

Not applicable.

BACKGROUND

Government Code Section 65400(b)(1) mandates that all cities and counties submit to their legislative bodies an annual report on the status of the general plan and its implementation. A copy of the report is required to be sent to both the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) and the State Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). The intent of the legislation is to ensure that the City's General Plan is relied upon for all land use decisions and that it remains an effective tool for guiding future development. The report serves to provide the City Council with information regarding the current status of the General Plan policies and their implementation during the past year.

For purposes of the report, the major themes of each of the General Plan's eight elements are provided below as paraphrased in the Plan's Introduction. The themes are followed by a brief

description of the activities taken during the past year to implement specific policies of that particular element. Since the elements are interrelated, many of the activities apply to more than one policy. Please refer to the General Plan document for the complete listing of goals, policies, and programs for each element.

DISCUSSION

Land Use Element

Summary: The Land Use Element provides the physical framework for the future growth of the community. It includes a discussion of the Larkspur Planing Area, the land use pattern in Larkspur, a description of the land use categories, and descriptions of the City's residential neighborhoods, commercial districts, and planned development districts. It also includes information regarding the City's public schools, public facilities, and open space areas. Most importantly, the Land Use Element includes the City's goals, policies, and programs relative to land uses in the City and proposed land use changes.

Major Themes:

- Preserve and enhance Larkspur's unique physical and natural setting, while accommodating suitable new development. Maintain the city's overall residential character and the scale of its neighborhoods. At the same time, encourage a diverse demographic (especially age and family and social) mix.
- Enhance the attractiveness and viability of existing commercial areas. Ensure that they provide neighborhood-serving businesses and are accessible by means other than the auto. Preserve the historical character of Downtown and its surrounding neighborhoods. Establish a town center or civic nucleus.
- Maintain the present mix of uses in the area east of Highway 101, especially the mobile homes affordable to seniors and to young families.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The first set of goals, policies and action programs in the Land Use Element address the City's neighborhoods. These are implemented through the regular actions of the Planning Commission and Planning Department staff during review of project applications. These reviews include ensuring that proposed densities are consistent with the General Plan and that projects meet the City's regulations that are designed to protect the City's hillsides and environmentally sensitive areas.

The City Council's current public hearings and review of the Draft Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) are specifically guided by the Land Use Element policies. They also are reflected in the Council's discussions of the project's impacts on the Community as well as its community benefits and housing components. These policies were also a factor in the Council's recent approval of a General Plan Amendment for the 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle project, which allowed for an increase in density from Medium (up to 12 du/ac) to High Density Residential (up to 21 du/ac).

The second and third set of goals, policies and action programs address the City's retail and commercial areas, and its Downtown, respectively. Again, both the Planning Commission and Planning Department staff implement the retail, commercial, and Downtown policies regularly through the implementation of the City's Zoning Ordinance and the City's Downtown Specific Plan (Action Program [13]). The City's relatively new design review process is an excellent tool for ensuring that new development is not detrimental to the surrounding residential community and will enhance the attractiveness and vitality of the existing development.

The Downtown policies are also implemented with the assistance of the City's Historic Preservation Board, which reviews project proposals for the Downtown Historic District. These practices are particularly evident in the approval this year by the Preservation Board and Planning Commission of the project at 484 Magnolia, which is the renovation of an existing commercial building in the Downtown with new residential units over commercial. There have also been several façade improvements to several of the buildings within the Downtown District.

In addition, the Planning Commission recently approved the renovation and expansion of the mini-mart of the Larkspur Gas Station, which will enhance that particular corner of the Downtown area. Further, the Council's consideration of the CLASP includes implementation of the General Plan policies including Action Program [17], which promotes the creation of a town square at or near the Magnolia Avenue intersection.

The next sections of the Element discuss Greenbrae East, vacant properties and those with redevelopment potential, the old Northwestern railroad right-of-way, San Quentin Peninsula, and regional relationships. Again, development of the CLASP and the City Council's current consideration of the Plan have been guided by the Element's action programs related to the Chevron/Walker property (aka the Nazari property) and the Niven Nursery site. The old Northwestern Pacific Railroad right-of-way has been and continues to be improved as a major regional pedestrian/bicycle pathway. Finally, the City continues to monitor the proposals for the San Quentin Prison site, including the State's current proposal to rebuild and expand the condemned inmate complex.

The final section of the Element is the Land Use Changes section. Of the land use changes identified in this section of the Plan, and as identified above, the Niven Nursery site and the Chevron/Walker property are under review as part of the City Council review of the draft CLASP. Also, in August, the City Council approved a General Plan amendment for the Sanitary District No. 1 site that increased the density from medium density to high density residential assisting in meeting the City's regional housing needs.

Community Character Element

Summary: The Community Character Element provides an overview of the elements of Larkspur's character including its boundaries, natural environment, built environment and gateways. Together with Appendices A and B of the General Plan, the Element provides descriptions of the City's gateways and its individual neighborhoods. The Community Character goals, policies and programs are outlined for preserving and enhancing the positives of the City's neighborhoods and for

eliminating the negatives. There is also a brief summary of the City's historic and archaeological resources together with associated goals, policies and programs.

Major Theme:

- Preserve, enhance, and strengthen Larkspur's livable and attractive environment, its community identity, and its special "sense of place." Promote a greater awareness of and sensitivity toward Larkspur's historic and archaeological heritage.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The community's character is always at the forefront in the consideration of any project proposal by the City Council, Planning Commission or Planning Department staff. The City's Zoning Ordinance, particularly its design review requirements, is the primary implementation tool to ensure the maintenance of and enhancement of the community's character. The City's Historic Preservation Board is active in encouraging broad-based community interest in and support for preservation activities through its historic preservation walks and participation in the local festivals. The Board also maintains the City's historic, archaeological, and natural resources inventory and is managing the current inventory update.

Circulation Element

Summary: As stated in the introduction to the Element, the Circulation Element "describes the existing circulation system and travel characteristics in and around the City of Larkspur. It also projects future demand for travel, based on "build-out" of the Land Use Plan and the anticipated circulation deficiencies that would result, and suggests potential ways to alleviate these inadequacies. At the conclusion, these technical analyses are brought together with practical community needs and desires, and presented as the Circulation Goals, Policies, and Programs."

Major Themes:

- Provide safe and efficient transportation facilities for moving people and goods within Larkspur. At the same time, give *quality of life* and *protection of the environment* a higher priority than "traffic mobility," and do everything possible to ameliorate the negative impacts of local and regional traffic on Larkspur.
- Assure adequate transit service in Larkspur (bus, ferry, airport limousine) as alternatives to the auto.
- Improve the connections between the several parts of Larkspur and with neighboring communities, as well as access from Larkspur to the freeway.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The City's Circulation Assessment Permit and traffic impact fee requirements are the tool for implementing many of the policies of the Circulation Element. Another tool is the City's Capital Improvement Program, which identifies the City's priorities for road and bridge improvements throughout the City. The current program of capacity enhancing improvements on East Sir Francis Drake Boulevard between Larkspur Landing Circle (west) and

Highway 101 are specifically listed in the City's Circulation Element as was the removal of the railroad trestle over that portion of the roadway.

As noted above under the discussion of the Land Use Element, the City Council's current public hearings and review of the Draft Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) are specifically guided by the General Plan policies. The Council in their discussions will be weighing the various land use, housing, and circulation policies of the General Plan in an attempt to find a balance that best meets the various needs of the community.

Another issue that has been of concern to the Council this past year has been the proposed SMART rail extension with a terminus in Larkspur east of Highway 101. The Circulation Element (e.g., Policy v) supports the concept of public transit including a rail connection from the north via a grade separation with Sir Francis Drake Boulevard along the approximate alignment of the existing trestle. This support, however, is qualified in the Element with the City's concerns regarding the impact of rail and its connection with the ferry terminal in terms of its potential to increase local traffic congestion (e.g., pages 80 and 82 of the Circulation Element and Policy v) and to impact the City's quality of life (Goal 1 and 4). Further, the policies state that it is important for the City to work with other agencies to come up with a regional transit option that serves Larkspur, but does not adversely affect it. This has been the City's intent over the past year in its discussions with SMART.

Community Facilities and Services Element

Summary: The Community Facilities and Services Element provides an overview of the level of public facilities and related services in Larkspur now and in the future including the City's goals, policies, and action programs relative to its community facilities and services. The public facilities addressed in the Element include parks, schools and other public facilities such as police, fire, City Hall, and the City's corporation yard. Related services include recreation, education, childcare, and general city government. Fire and police *services* are addressed in the Safety section of the Community Health and Safety Element.

Major Themes:

- Provide park facilities and recreation programs for all age groups.
- Cooperate with the school districts to share resources and provide a high level of cultural, recreational, and community use of public buildings and lands. Preserve all existing school sites for future public use, giving school use the highest priority. Renovate and expand public buildings and facilities to meet growing demands for services over the next 20 years.
- Ensure the availability of quality childcare in Larkspur.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The City's Annual Budget and Capital Improvement Program are the primary tools for implementing the Community Facilities and Services Element of the General Plan and, within the City's funding abilities, it properly reflects the City's goal of

providing park facilities and recreation programs for all age groups. Further, the City continues to work with the Town of Corte Madera to coordinate the use of facilities and services to better serve both communities. The cooperation with the school districts is exemplified in the continued use and maintenance of the jointly funded gymnasium at Hall Middle School and the ongoing discussions relative to similar joint ventures with the Tamalpais Union High School District.

Also, this past year, the City has completed the preliminary plans for the relocation and reconstruction of the City's corporation yard and the Twin Cities Police Station. Within current budget constraints, renovation of Fire Station #1 (replacement of interior stairways) has also been underway.

Environmental Resources Element

Summary: The Environmental Resources Element includes an overview, as well as the goals, policies and programs of the City as they relate to open space and preservation of the natural environment, water conservation, water quality, and waste recycling.

Major Themes:

- Preserve and enhance open space features, including marshes and wetlands along San Francisco Bay and Corte Madera Creek, wildlife habitats, view corridors, and ridgelines. Maintain the Corte Madera and Southern Heights Ridges as open space and as community separators between Larkspur and Mill Valley and between Larkspur and San Rafael.
- Protect open space and shoreline/marsh conservation areas from any degradation that could result from public facility improvements such as roads, paths, sewers, or flood control projects.
- Reduce water consumption.
- Reduce the total volume of the city's waste stream.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The implementation of the Environmental Resources Element is ongoing with the implementation of the City's Zoning Ordinance and related zoning districts as well as the implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act as it applies to various projects. Most recently, the City Council reviewed and considered the General Plan Amendment and associated Planned Development proposal for 2000 Larkspur Landing Circle relative to the project's impacts on the City's environmental resources. After denial of the original project by the Planning Commission, and based on direction from both the City Council and Planning Commission, the applicants revised their project so as to protect a significant habitat area while still meeting the City's objectives for the site relative to housing needs.

Community Health and Safety Element

Summary: The Community Health and Safety Element addresses safety and noise requirements required within the Government Code. It also includes air quality, which the Bay Area Air Quality

Management District encourages be included within a community's General Plan. As stated in the introduction to the Element, "Community health and safety involves the protection of the community from natural hazards such as floods, earthquakes, landslides, and fires. It also involves protection from man-made hazards such as air pollution, noise, and hazardous materials. This chapter describes the scope of these hazards, as well as the actions that the City can take to eliminate or reduce the probability of these hazards leading to a major disaster. The overall purpose of this chapter is to protect the community from injury, loss of life, and property damage resulting from natural disasters and hazardous conditions."

Major Themes:

- Do what the City can, within reason, to protect the community from injury, loss of life, and property damage resulting from natural disasters and hazardous conditions. Increase public awareness of flooding, seismic, landslide, fire, and other natural hazards, and of methods to avoid or mitigate their effects. Deter development in areas prone to such hazards.
- Protect Larkspur from accidental exposure to hazardous materials from spills, leaks, vapor releases, and improper or illegal storage and disposal.
- Reduce the adverse effects of noise upon persons living or working in Larkspur, especially the escalation of sound levels in areas where noise sensitive uses exist.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The City has been a participant in the drafting of the Marin County Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan and recently has been reviewing its minimum finished floor elevation requirements within flood zone areas to ensure that they reflect the latest determinations by FEMA relative to the local flood hazard. In addition, the City's Building Code, Fire Code, Zoning Ordinance, and more recently Resolution 05/04 which reaffirms the City's Fire Safety Hillside Development Standards, are used as tools to implement the policies of the Element. Further, the application of the California Environmental Quality Act also serves as a tool to implement the Element's policies particularly as they relate to geology, noise, and air quality.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths Element

Summary: The Bicycle and Pedestrian Trails and Paths Element is intended to provide the City with the vision to plan and secure a complete citywide system of trails and paths that link sections of Larkspur to one another and to neighboring communities and open space areas. The Element was developed in coordination with the Marin Countywide Trails Plan.

Major Theme:

- Make it easier to move around Larkspur without having to use a car. Provide safe, paved, bicycle and pedestrian paths to schools, shopping areas, recreation facilities, and open space preserves. Improve traffic safety for bicyclists and pedestrians.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: Through the Capital Improvement Program, the City continues to improve on the City's bicycle and pedestrian pathways. The Council's discussion of

the draft CLASP also includes consideration of the links within the trail and path system that will connect to and through the CLASP area.

Housing Element

Summary: The Housing Element addresses the requirements of State Housing Law, but more importantly it addresses the needs of the City. The Element includes a housing needs analysis, a housing opportunities analysis, the City's vision, goals and objectives relative to housing, and the City's housing policies and implementing programs.

Major Themes (also the Housing Element Objectives):

- Enhance our sense of community by identifying shared responsibilities from all sectors within the community (government, business, neighborhoods, non-profits, etc.) that effectively address the City's housing needs.
- Promote equal housing opportunities for all persons and assure effective application of Fair Housing law.
- Assure that new housing is well designed and of an appropriate scale to enhance our neighborhoods and community as a whole. Protect and enhance the housing we have and ensure that existing affordable housing "at risk" of conversion to market rates will remain affordable.
- Promote the creation of housing near the workplace and establish non-residential use contributions to affordable workforce housing.
- Maintain a diverse population by providing a variety of choices in the type, size, cost and location of new housing and more efficient use of existing housing, including the creative and efficient use of vacant land and the redevelopment of built land within established development areas to support local transit and services, maximize sustainability, and help maintain our environment and open space.
- City seeks to provide its "Fair Share" of very-low, low and moderate-income housing and to ensure affordable housing remains affordable over a long term.
- Encourage well-designed, legal second units in all residential neighborhoods.
- Provide housing for population groups who require special assistance. Provide housing assistance for special needs and link housing to Health and Human Services programs helping meet the needs of seniors, people with disabilities, homeless and others.
- Be aggressive and creative in finding ways to increase ongoing local funding resources for low income special needs housing.
- Encourage energy conservation in housing.

- Take a proactive approach in sharing resources and making organizational changes to effectively create and respond to opportunities to achieve housing goals.

Goals, Policies and Action Programs: The policies and programs outlined in the Housing Element that are to be implemented on an ongoing basis continue to be implemented as the opportunities present themselves, such as providing housing information, implementing the City's design review procedures, the prohibition of condominium conversions due to the low rental vacancy rate, presale home inspections, update of the City's historic resources inventory, inspection of multi-family residences, and priority processing of applications that include affordable housing.

The City has also updated its Inclusionary Housing Ordinance to be consistent with the Housing Element and is in the process of considering additional updates to its parking and floor area ratio standards. The City's General Plan and Zoning regulations have been amended to encourage the construction of residential units above commercial and to allow for new housing to be considered on lands north of Corte Madera Creek.

In terms of meeting its Regional Housing Needs objectives, the City has approved three second residential dwelling units, two very low/low income units located above commercial in the Downtown area, and a General Plan Amendment and Preliminary Development Plan for 126 residential units (12 low income and 13 moderate income) on the Sanitary District Property (first reading approved and second reading scheduled same night as this report). In addition, the Planning Commission has completed its recommendations on the Central Larkspur Specific Plan (CLASP) and the City Council should complete their deliberations on the CLASP by November of this year. Also, the owner of the McLaren Property continues to discuss with staff the development of his property with multifamily units.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Accept 2005 Annual Report on the Larkspur General Plan and direct staff to send the Report to the State Office of Planning and Research and the State Department of Housing and Community Development

Respectfully submitted,
Nancy Kaufman
Planning Director

